

# Appendix 8



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL  
CHARLES C. MADDOX, ESQ.  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

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INSPECTIONS AND EVALUATIONS DIVISION  
***MANAGEMENT ALERT REPORT***

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
YOUTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
OAK HILL YOUTH CENTER**

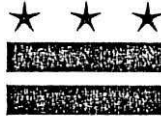
**INSUFFICIENT COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT  
AT OAK HILL YOUTH CENTER**

**MAR 03 – I - 008**  
**NOVEMBER 20, 2003**

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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General



November 20, 2003

Yvonne D. Gilchrist  
Acting Director  
Department of Human Services  
2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE  
801 East Building  
Washington, DC 20032

Vanessa Chappell-Lee  
Deputy Director for Programs  
Department of Human Services  
8300 Riverton Court  
Laurel, MD 20724

Dear Ms. Gilchrist and Ms. Chappell-Lee:

This is a Management Alert Report (03-I-008) to inform you of significant issues that have come to our attention as a result of our inspection of the Department of Human Services Youth Services Administration (YSA). The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) provides these reports when we believe a serious matter requires the immediate attention of a District of Columbia government official.

**Background:**

The inspection team (team) observed a lack of sufficient and reliable communication equipment in a number of locations at the Oak Hill Youth Center detention facility (Oak Hill) in Laurel, Maryland. This deficiency threatens overall safety and security, and particularly impairs the ability of Youth Corrections Officers (YCOs), transportation officers, treatment team leaders, and social services representatives to perform their jobs effectively.

**Observations:**

1. Some YCOs do not have the two-way radios that are used to communicate with Oak Hill's Security Control Office in an emergency. This deficiency jeopardizes an officer's safety and compromises overall security at the facility.

YCOs provide security and supervision within the various education, recreation, treatment, and residential buildings, and escort youth between buildings on the secured grounds. On multiple visits to Oak Hill, the team noted that many of the YCOs on duty in the housing units were not carrying two-way radios. YCOs stated that often there is only one radio available within each housing unit<sup>1</sup>, even though there may be two or more officers working during a shift. The team also observed YCOs without two-way radios escorting and supervising youth in areas other than the housing units. Several radios were in poor condition. For example, one appeared to be held together with clear tape, while another was bound with rubber bands.

The quantity and condition of the two-way radios represent a significant threat to the safety of YCOs, especially those working in the housing units. If there is only one two-way radio in a unit, and the officer carrying that radio is involved in an altercation that renders the radio inoperable or inaccessible, other officers on duty in the unit may be unable to request assistance from the Security Control Office in a timely manner. In that scenario, an officer would have to seek out the nearest, available wired telephone.

**2. Some of the wired telephones located in the YCO offices of the housing units are not functioning.**

It is critical that the YCO office in each housing unit has a functioning telephone as backup to the two-way radios so that if a radio malfunctions, YCOs can communicate with the Security Control Office. If YCOs do not have access to an operable two-way radio in an emergency, their safety and that of a facility's youths may depend upon a working telephone. The team visited Oak Hill's housing units on September 10, 2003, and noted the poor condition and inadequate number of functioning wired telephones. YCOs on duty in one unit stated that their telephone had not worked since late June 2003, and they did not have access to another one. The team also reviewed documents in the Facilities Management Division and noted several unresolved telephone repair requests that were over 2 weeks old.

**3. An inadequate number of telephones for youths' personal calls contributes to security risks in the housing units, and in one observed instance, violated the Jerry M. Consent Decree.**

As stipulated in the Jerry M. Consent Decree (Decree)<sup>2</sup>, "children are entitled to two telephone calls per week of ten minutes each" and "telephones will be located on each living unit." *Jerry M. v. District of Columbia*, Civ. No. 1569-85 (D.C. Super. Ct. July 24, 1986). Our inspection revealed that the number of telephones available for these calls in the living units is insufficient

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<sup>1</sup> Oak Hill housing units 7, 8, 9, and 10 each have an "A" unit and a "B" unit, which the inspection team views as two separate housing units.

<sup>2</sup> In 1985, in an effort to improve conditions at Oak Hill and two other juvenile facilities operated by the District, attorneys filed a class-action lawsuit against the District on behalf of detained and committed youth. In 1986, the District settled the lawsuit by negotiating and agreeing to the provisions of the Jerry M. Consent Decree, a court order that enumerates minimum standards for various conditions and programs at Oak Hill.

and in at least one unit violates the Decree. As mentioned above, YCOs in one unit stated that their telephone had not worked since June 2003 and they did not have access to another telephone. This condition prevented the YCOs from providing youths with their biweekly calls from a telephone in the youth's living unit, as stipulated in the Decree.

YSA policy number 18.2, section IV B (1), effective June 29, 2001, states that "[a] case manager, or in their absence a YCO[,] must place all calls for the youth...." According to several YCOs, often, the only phones available for these calls are in the YCO offices. However, case managers and YCOs should not use telephones in the YCO office in order to avoid the risk of a youth creating a disturbance and disabling the YCO telephone. This could create a security emergency, particularly if no two-way radios are available.

**4. Transportation officers who escort youths to D.C. Superior Court are not issued radios or cell phones for emergency communication.**

Transportation officers escort youths from Oak Hill to D.C. Superior Court on "court buses," and transport youths to treatment facilities within the D.C. metropolitan area in passenger vans. The team interviewed these officers and observed their work practices.

Although drivers of the "court buses" are issued D.C. government cellular telephones, none of the three to four officers escorting youths on the buses and vans are issued either two-way radios or cellular telephones. Consequently, drivers become the primary means of emergency communication with the Oak Hill Security Control Office or other entities that provide assistance. However, security and emergency communication should be the responsibility of the escorting officers. Those officers who elect to use their personal cellular telephones during these trips say they are not reimbursed for official calls, and this expense becomes particularly burdensome during interstate transfers of youths.

**5. Some Social Services Division employees do not have working telephones and voice mailboxes.**

Social Services Division (SSD) employees, such as treatment team leaders and social services representatives, coordinate the diagnostic assessment and treatment processes for Oak Hill youths. They monitor the completion of initial diagnostic screenings (e.g., substance abuse, education, mental health, and medical condition), conduct individual and group counseling sessions, issue additional diagnostic and treatment referrals, and update each youth's treatment goals and objectives as needed. SSD employees communicate regularly with the youths' families, off-site case managers, and treatment providers. Each treatment team leader and social services representative has office space in an assigned housing unit.

Inspection team members observed that some SSD employees do not have telephones in their unit offices or functioning mailboxes on the facility's voice mail system. Those without telephones must use telephones in another unit or use their personal cell phones. Those without voice mail capability either use their personal cell phones or instruct callers to dial the SSD main phone number and leave a message with the person who answers the phone.

The treatment team leaders and social services representatives provide a vital link among Oak Hill youth, their families, and various agencies and service providers located both within the facility and in the community. These employees provide critical, time-sensitive information and updates to family members and off-site caseworkers. The lack of a telephone or a working voice mailbox seriously impedes an SSD employee's ability to provide responsive care and efficiently interact with all parties participating in a youth's treatment and rehabilitation.

### **Recommendations:**

The lack of sufficient communication equipment for YCOs and transportation officers poses a threat to the overall safety and security of youth and YSA staff both on the grounds of Oak Hill and during the transportation of youth to and from the facility. In addition, the lack of operable telephones and voice mailboxes impedes the delivery of time-sensitive referrals and other vital information, and limits communication between the family members of detained and committed youths and the youths' case managers. Accordingly, we recommend that the YSA Administrator immediately take the following measures:

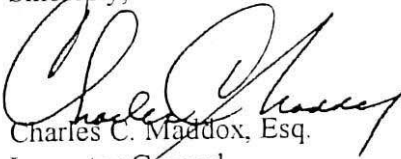
1. Ensure that each Youth Corrections Officer on-duty at Oak Hill has a functional two-way radio for the duration of his or her shift.
2. Repair wired telephones and lines so that both the YCO office and the social services office in each housing unit have working telephones.
3. Provide additional working telephones in each housing unit (i.e. a phone other than the one in the YCO office) to accommodate the youths' right to biweekly telephone calls in accordance with the Jerry M. Consent Decree.
4. Direct a review of communication equipment available for use by transportation officers while on court buses and in passenger vans to ensure that at least one member of each transportation unit, in addition to the driver, is able to communicate with the Oak Hill Security Control Office as well as with outside public safety agencies. If there is insufficient equipment available, the Administrator should acquire additional communication equipment.
5. Ensure that employees in the Social Services Division (treatment team leaders, social services representatives, and their supervisors) have functioning telephones and voice mailboxes.

Please provide your comments on this MAR by December 5, 2003. Your response should include actions taken or planned, dates for completion of planned actions, and reasons for any disagreement with the concerns and recommendations presented. Please distribute this Management Alert Report to only those personnel who will be directly involved in preparing your response.

MAR to Yvonne D. Gilchrist and Vanessa Chappell-Lee  
November 20, 2003  
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Should you have questions or desire a conference prior to preparing your response, please contact Lawrence Perry, Director of Planning and Inspections, at 202-727-8490.

Sincerely,



Charles C. Maddox, Esq.  
Inspector General

CCM/ef

cc: Mr. Robert C. Bobb, City Administrator, Office of the City Administrator  
Ms. Carolyn Graham, Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders